



PRESS RELEASE

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Final Five Defendants in Sonnenberg Drug Conspiracy Plead Guilty

Madison, Wisconsin -- Erik C. Peterson, United States Attorney for the Western District of Wisconsin, announced that the final five defendants in the Sonnenberg drug conspiracy pleaded guilty this week in U.S. District Court in Madison to conspiring to distribute, and distributing, crack cocaine on St. Croix Tribal lands. The following defendants pleaded guilty on March 30: (1) Margrette Cobb, 28, Rice Lake, Wisconsin; (2) Bruce Sonnenberg, 49, Cumberland, Wisconsin; (3) Amanda Sonnenberg, 24, Cumberland, Wisconsin; and (4) Jean Sonnenberg, 52, Cumberland, Wisconsin. Bruce Rainey, 30, Eau Claire, Wisconsin, pleaded guilty on March 31. Amanda Sonnenberg faces a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison without parole. Each of the remaining defendants faces a mandatory minimum of ten years in prison, and a maximum penalty of life in prison, without parole. Visiting Judge James Moody, from the Northern District of Indiana, accepted the guilty pleas and will schedule sentencing dates in the near future.

The government's proof at the guilty plea hearings established that each of these defendants worked together, and with others in the conspiracy, to obtain and distribute crack cocaine on St. Croix Tribal lands from at least January 2001 through September

2008. Each of the defendants, at various times, traveled with Jean Sonnenberg, and others, to obtain crack cocaine from sources in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area. The drugs were then sold to customers on tribal lands in northwestern Wisconsin. During the first several months of 2008, an individual working with law enforcement officers purchased crack cocaine from these five defendants on several occasions. Each of these purchases was recorded by law enforcement officers. .

United States Attorney Peterson stated that today's guilty pleas resulted from a long-term investigation being conducted by the Wisconsin Department of Justice, Division of Criminal Investigation-Narcotics Bureau; the Federal Bureau of Investigation; the St. Croix Tribal Police Department; the Rice Lake Police Department; the Barron County Sheriff's Department; the Burnett County Sheriff's Department; the Polk County Sheriff's Department; the Native American Drug & Gang Initiative; and the Wisconsin State Patrol. Peterson stated that the investigation is continuing and additional indictments and arrests are expected.

Prosecution of the cases is being handled by Assistant U.S. Attorney John W. Vaudreuil.

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